1675

Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."

JOHN HAY.

Problems of Anarchism.

LABOR.

1.— *The Meaning of the Labor Question.*

This is a living question; its interest lies not in the past, not in other lands among unknown peoples, or even in the dim and distant future, but is of the age, the hour, here and now. Neither is it a question of abstract rights, of metaphysical ideas, of academic teaching or belief, for it supremely concerns living, thinking, toiling men and women, the generation of today. The life of the people is bound up in it; their morals, happiness, social progress, are all interwoven with the conditions of the labor problem. Hence it matters not that books have been written, thinkers have thought and studied, agitations and movements have arisen to reconcile the conflicting interests and adjust economic forces to better conditions, only to demonstrate the multitudinous variety of opinion, dogma, and conjecture in which the issues are enwrapped; the matter is still fresh, still needing more light, still inviting closer study, intelligent exposition, and a clear solution. Only to the thoughtless, the unsympathetic, and the unsocial person can its discussion seem useless and unattractive. In our day great achievements have become quite common, rapid progress the rule, and it is easy to point to the wonders of science, industry, and commerce, the mighty strides, the incalculable advantages that mark the age, the growing power of man over natural forces, the increase of wealth and facilities for its unlimited production; to deny the benefit that all classes derive from these signs of change or to attempt to belittle it were stupidity and folly. The growth and concentration of wealth, we often hear, are evils indicating a diseased society, an approaching and overwhelming crash. Yet in this very increase of wealth we can see the evidence of greater stability, easier and more certain life for society. And here as in other instances we see that what may tend to the security and welfare of society is not necessarily identical with the immediate welfare of the individual. Many indeed are crushed and suppressed that the aggregate may live and advance. While admitting so much, it must also be said that such facts in no wise justify the result, they but point to an undeveloped, conflicting, and transitional stage, the sooner over and out of the better. Let us look a little closer. Among the working classes today could be paralleled some of the worst phases of human suffering and degradation that the past can furnish. Even chattel slavery would appear an improvement on some features of modern wage slavery. The assured life of society as a whole is hardly compensation for the uncertain, precarious, and unsuccessful lives which many individuals must inevitably lead. Increased productive power, machinery, mechanical and scientific improvements, are in many ways beneficial and essential to the progress of the race. Labor-saving inventions cannot increase too fast. Wealthy capitalist and great corporate enterprises seeking their own interests are impelled to improve facilities for the production and distribution of wealth. The ever-increasing power of labor, partly through its more intelligent use and largely through increasing application of capital, results in more uniformity in the supply and price with a continual tendency to reduce the cost of all the means of life.

But the application of inventive skill is unceasingly adding to the unemployed; machinery in every industry seems to replace men; the aggregation of productive wealth and the combination of capitalists set the wage-workers more and more at the mercy of their masters. While competition and improved methods lower the cost, labor not unfrequently loses more under the strain than is gained thereby on the part of society. And while the well-to-do classes in modern society tend to increase in proportion to the whole, there is no reason to believe that the poorer classes are decreasing; indeed, the uncertainty and aimlessness of life on the part of the weaker victims become more intense. Modern society can do so well without its weaker members. Small wonder that, seeing the power for evil possessed by the ruling authorities, though not discerning its effects, so many people who feel the importance of the labor problem clamor continually to the lawmakers for relief. Vaguely it is seen that the use or abuse of power is responsible for much of the injustice that is endured, that political authority should shoulder the responsibility for the crying economic evils that confront us. Not knowing how to abolish political and legal coercion, or clearly recognizing the need to do so, it is surmised that such powers are intimately related to the trouble, and as a consequence we have the continual cry for government help, for labor legislation that will save the worker from the consequences of the system, for relief from the burdens of a one-sided capitalism and individualism, from the injustices of monopoly, and all other real or imaginary grievances. The discontent spreads, but the demand for relief indicates the helplessness and dependence of the wage-workers; their sense of self-reliance is not strong enough to make them throw their faith in authoritative institutions to the winds and boldly face the question themselves without the direction of their political rulers.

To speak of classes in society today, especially in America, may appear arbitrary and unscientific. No sharply defined lines can be drawn socially or economically, as the gradations are imperceptible and the transitions from one grade to another continuous and with no fixed barriers between. But it is agreed on all sides that distinct classes exist, and that economic conditions account for the division. One need not go to the political economists to learn the classification, for it is exemplified in the experience of practical life. And what is worthy of note, the class divisions of capitalism arise without the aid of feudal and aristocratic institutions, as we see in the present state of American society. Nor is it necessary in observing the effects of economic classes to go to Europe, for here also we know that the capitalist and professional classes are as a rule better off and more secure, both in income and accumulated wealth, as they grow older, and so pass on their possessions to their children; while the wage-workers, though none the less industrious and essential in the social machinery, from the start receive less recompense, are seldom able to accumulate wealth, and in the declining years of life suffer loss of income as wage-workers, and, if they reach old age at all, are without property, dependent on their children or on society for support, and of course to their offspring leave no legacy but the poverty and necessity to sell their labor which was their own birthright. And mark that this result is not due to the greater usefulness or ability of the one class over the other; it is not the virtue, industry, or abstinence of the one, the vice, indolence, or improvidence of the other, which produce such opposite effects, but these results are the inevitable and unavoidable outcome of the existing economic system. If the laboring classes would live on half their earnings, work three hundred and sixty-five days a year, and save the surplus, they would not attain the circumstances of the classes above, who enjoy life, deny themselves nothing, and yet, when they die, leave a patrimony to their children. No change affecting only the habits and personal conduct of the workers can remove economic evils. The tendency of the time is to intensify the class distinctions just pointed out. Generally it is true that the offspring of the well-to-do retain their status in society, and wealth remains practically in the hands of a class passing on from generation to generation. And, except in a few instances, where great talent or special opportunity makes a workingman wealthy, — instances greatly overestimated, — the children of the wage-workers simply replace their parents in the labor market. While this is approximately correct of present conditions in America, it is bound to be more apparent as wealth and population increase.

The reality of the class division is well illustrated in the attitude of political authority when labor troubles arise. Why is it that the power of the State, police, militia, soldiery, is always used in one way and for a single purpose when the conflicting interests of the wage-workers and their masters take an acute form? In spite of democracy and manhood suffrage, the economically superior class, the part of society having permanent economic advantage through its monopoly of wealth and privilege, never fails to control the coercive machinery of government in its own interest. Strikers are rebels against existing economic arrangements, which the capitalists believe to be for their benefit and are therefore determined to maintain. And as government in its merely political capacity suppresses every attempt at rebellion against its authority, so in its capacity of upholder of economic authority, the power of the capitalists, it is ever ready to mete out the same penalty upon the industrial rebel, the wage-worker on strike. The analogy between the British government suppressing a rebellion in India or Ireland and the American State or Federal power putting down an industrial revolt at Homestead or Buffalo is no fanciful similitude, but has a significant meaning. Remembering also what the Kaiser said to the Westphalian miners who were on strike, and how the French republican government acted, not only with the Communards, but in recent days with the workingmen at Decazeville, Fourmies, and other places, to say nothing of the fate of the Chicago martyrs, we may conclude that political power will show more virulence and less mercy in dealing with economic rebels than with those who revolt against its political authority.

These considerations should prove to the labor reformer that something more than a change of power is required to make the workers free. It is true that governmental coercion maintains existing conditions by forcibly preventing any radical attempt at change, but the evil exists in the economic arrangements, which themselves must be reformed to effect an improvement. If the Carnegies had not an advantage over the wage-workers by means of their monopoly of capital and opportunities for producing wealth, — a superiority inherent in the conditions making the laborers dependent upon the monopolists, — then the working classes would have nothing to fear from a refusal to accede to the terms of their masters; but, being so dependent, they are doubly enslaved both by monopoly of the means of labor and by the governmental power which the capitalists have at their command to enforce submission. It is not control of the militia that the workers

(Continued on page 3.)

Liberty.

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel."—PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience

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Why Not Circulate a Million?

As an excellent and effective method of propagandism, and as a means of advertising "Instead of a Book," Liberty, and my publications in general, I contemplate issuing the first chapter of "Instead of a Book," entitled "State Socialism and Anarchism," as a small sixteen-page pamphlet, printed on paper of light weight, with a colored cover. The cover pages will be used for the advertising above referred to. It is believed that this pamphlet will be in itself a powerful weapon for Anarchism and against State Socialism, and, if distributed as sample pages of "Instead of a Book," will cause a large sale for that volume. Therefore, while the price of single copies of the pamphlet will be placed at five cents, it will be offered in lots of one hundred copies for eighty-five cents, post-paid,—that is, less than one cent a copy. This is a splendid opportunity for those desiring either to sell or to give away Anarchistic literature. Liberty's readers are invited to send in their orders as soon as possible and to make them as large as possible. The cash should be remitted with the order. Before proceeding with the work I shall wait a week or two to see how the responses come in. T.

Didn't Know It Was Loaded.

A good many editors have said a good many foolish things about the recent decision of Judge Ricks relative to the railroad engineers. And these foolish things are not confined to those who look with favor on the decision, either. Indeed, some of the most foolish and illogical come from so-called labor editors. From the light I have on the subject I do not see how the decision could have been otherwise and be logical. It was, it seems to me, very much in harmony with the Inter-State commerce law. The people clamored for the law until they got it, and because the engineers got a black eye from it the same people are calling the poor judge all sorts of hard names for being too logical and lawing down the law. You see, they didn't know the thing was loaded. They never do. The whole crew that are crying for government control of this and government control of that seem not to comprehend that all the laws looking to that end are loaded so as to be most dangerous to the fellow who is doing the shooting, so to speak.

But this Ricks decision has several good things in it withal, the most important of which is to make the people hesitate about resorting to law for the redress of grievances. Besides this, it brings prominently to the front the question of the right of employees to quit when they feel like it, and the right of employers to discharge when the whim strikes them. I hold to the opinion that employees have no right to strike until the contract existing between them and the employer has been fulfilled, whether the contract be written or implied, and that the employer has no right to discharge until the contract has been completed. If I am working by the week for any one, he has no right to discharge me before the week is up if I do the work agreed upon in the manner agreed upon; but at the same time I have no right to quit him until the week is completed. The idea that employees have a right to strike at any time carries with it the right of the employer to do the bounce act at will. The side that gets the worst of that sort of an arrangement shouldn't play the baby act and cry. However, we poor "fool Anarchists" can afford to wait; things are coming our way.

JOSEPH A. LABADIE.

Press Opinions of "Instead of a Book."

In pursuance of my announced purpose, approved by all the readers of Liberty from whom I have heard, I begin the publication of the newspaper notices of "Instead of a Book," heading the list with that of the "Daily Mercury," published at New Bedford, Mass. This was one of the first notices that the volume received, and it will stand as one of the fairest and best, —a fact the more remarkable because New Bedford was for many years my home and therefore the city of all others, in accordance with the usual experience of men who think for themselves, where I am most misunderstood.

The voice of Benjamin R. Tucker is mostly, it must be confessed, as of one crying in a wilderness of doubt as to his sanity or of misgiving as to his honesty. We fancy that a good many people who know of Mr. Tucker as an Anarchist, and who have occasionally chanced upon some especially vigorous sentence from his pen, regard him as a queer social phenomenon, not to be taken soberly nor seriously, but rather as a peculiarly fantastic freak in the world museum of sociological curios.

Really, Mr. Tucker is a man with an idea which possesses his heart and soul, and which he expounds in a very incisive and charming, and sometimes convincing way. We dare say he is not himself always consistent, though he is peculiarly fond of pointing out the inconsistencies of his adversaries. Somebody or other has said that "Consistency is the vice of weak minds," and it would hardly be profitable to notice a man whose scheme of social science and whose arguments in its support were flawless in their consistency. Whatever faults or contradictions there are in Mr. Tucker's theories, we leave to the discovery of men who care to pursue that branch of the subject. It seems to us not unprofitable to point out a few of the things which he says, and which it is quite worth the while of the world to hear. Mr. Tucker undoubtedly takes extreme views, and the drift is now almost wholly against him; but that is exactly why he demands attention, and it is one reason why he is a useful force.

"Instead of a Book; by a Man Too Busy to Write One," is Mr. Tucker's title for a substantial collection of essays, letters, addresses, editorial paragraphs, etc., which make what he calls "a fragmentary exposition of philosophical Anarchism." The volume gives a complete setting-forth of the author's social, religious, political, and economic creed, which is — but it is fairer to let him speak for himself. In an article prepared for the "North American Review," but which, it appears, was never printed in that magazine, he says: [Here follows an extract from the book, beginning with the last line of page 13 and running to the end of the paragraph.]

If we correctly understand the basis of philosophical Anarchism, this quotation comes very near to being a complete statement of what it is. All the rest is merely elaboration and argument. After all, it is not, in its essence, so very startling. When he says that the Anarchists are simply unterrified Jeffersonian Democrats, Mr. Tucker explains the whole thing in a way that would have been perfectly simple to almost everybody not so many years ago. To be sure, the maxim that "the best government is that which governs least" has been discarded as a working hypothesis by the latter-day successors of the Jeffersonian Democracy, but it is well that it should not be forgotten in these times when it seems almost universally concluded that the best government is that which governs most.

Mr. Tucker indulges in roseate dreams of social and moral reform to come from the practical application of his Anarchistic theories. There is a hint of this in the quotation above. We also find him saying, "They believe liberty [*i. e.*, Anarchy] and the resultant well-being to be a sure cure for all the vices." The State Socialists, as we well know, see the sure cure for all the vices in a precisely opposite state of society. They also maintain their position with skill. They are quite as sincere, quite as determined, quite as charmingly convincing — at times — as this apostle of freedom, and it is small wonder if men whose busy lives leave them scant leisure for reflection are confused and cry out against the whole debate as a mockery, and against the debaters as needless disturbers of the peace.

But this is unfair to both. It is unfair to this revolutionary Anarchist, who is doing a real service by his uncompromising emphasis of the dignity and value of the individual. In a time like this, when the tendency to magnify every form of organized effort is so great and so irresistible, there is need that some one should stand up for the freedom and the value of the single man. If he carries his championship to an extreme, and if he advocates applications of his doctrine which the experience of mankind has thus far found impractical, it may be unwise in him, but it does not alter the fact that he exercises an important function in assisting to correct the abuses of the opposing theory. He wakens thought and promotes discussion which is educational and helpfully stimulating.

We have found the volume full of interest, and containing many valuable thoughts. Mr. Tucker's positiveness that he is advocating the only genuine plan of salvation gives its contents a life and spirit which few books of its character possess. His style is wonderfully

clear and luminous, as a rule; and while he is often sharp and sarcastic, he is still good-natured. We do not look for a speedy realization of his ideal; but we do think that much which he says is worthy of attentive consideration.

Much less intelligent than the foregoing, though perhaps no less fair and liberal in intent, is the following from the Lowell (Mass.) "Times," which reviewed the book in connection with Gary's article in the "Century":

The "Century" for April contains a paper which may be read with great interest, not the less so because it seems of a very unusual order. "The Chicago Anarchists of 1886—the Crime, the Trial, and the Punishment," is an exhaustive account of the whole subject, written by Hon. Joseph E. Gary, who was the judge presiding at the trial. . . . The paper will be welcomed as a dispassionate *résumé* of the sad affair and of the still sadder power of the doctrines which led to such a culmination; yet in the minds of many will be found a regret that the judge should in any degree appear to put himself on the defensive for a verdict which so fully accorded with the ideas of justice and of necessity held almost unanimously by those who believe in the existing order of things.

That there are, however, a great number of people in our country who do not believe in the existing order of things and with whom Judge Gary has no possible common ground from which to argue, is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that coincident with the arrival of the "Century" at the "Times" office came from puritanic Boston "Instead of a Book, by a Man Too Busy to Write One," Benj. R. Tucker. Here is a closely printed book of over 500 pages, nearly all from the pen of Mr. Tucker, aptly described by its compiler. Being too busy to write a book, Mr. Tucker has arranged, with some degree of classified order, extracts from Liberty, the paper which he has published since 1881. The aim and object of this Boston publication is to assist in "the dissolution of government in the economic organism." It is the organ of Anarchism, which Mr. Tucker himself defines as "the doctrine that all the affairs of men shall be managed by individuals or voluntary associations, and that the State shall be abolished." The Anarchist looks for the abolition of all constituted authority as the cure for all evils; he boldly avows his belief that no code of morals should be forced upon the individual, that all taxes and tariffs should be abolished, that "mind your own business" should be the only moral law, that "the drunkard, the rake, and the harlot" shall be free to live their lives "until they choose to abandon them," that conjugal and parental rights and responsibilities should be abandoned, that the sexes should be allowed to intermingle at their own free will. Mr. Tucker asserts his belief that the martyrs of Chicago did far more to help "by their glorious death upon the gallows" than they had been able to do in their lives.

Here are the two extremes in political economy set forth by able exponents, Judge Gary on the one hand, Mr. Tucker on the other, one an exponent of constituted Authority, the other of Anarchism, one denouncing Spies and his fellows as murderers, the other extolling them as martyrs and as the seed of a great Anarchistic "church" of the future. "Hitherto have we come," and the believer in progress and the right of the individual to be an authority to himself may well "set up his Ebenezer" and thank God (if he acknowledges one) that current American literature allows him at least to study social problems all along this vast line and to choose for himself with which extreme he will identify himself, or where in the long line between these remote antipodes he will attempt to fix his feet. It is useless to ignore the fact that people are thus choosing in vast multitudes, notwithstanding the traditions of the fathers.

Aside from its inexcusable failure to discriminate between Anarchists and Communists, it is to be noted that the "Times," in disadvantageous contrast to the "Mercury," which thoughtfully laid the emphasis on the Anarchistic claim that liberty will cure all the vices, dwells with special stress on the Anarchistic claim of liberty for the vicious. We have here an excellent illustration of the contrast between the sensational critic and the critic who is above sensationalism. But, not to be unfair to the "Times," I will contrast its remarks, on the other hand, with a bit of pure Philistinism from the New Orleans "Picayune":

The title page calls this "A Fragmentary Exposition of Philosophical Anarchism Culled from the Writings of Benj. R. Tucker." Who did the culling is not stated, but, as the preface is signed with the initials B. R. T., it is fair to suppose that it was the author himself. The book seems to have only one chapter, and that the first, that was written for it; and the remainder of the pages are filled with a lot of essays, speeches, and editorials from Liberty, of which publication the author is the editor. It sets forth the principles of Anarchy with no uncertain sound, and the sum of those principles seems to be that every individual is to do just what he pleases, not what he thinks right, but what he pleases. No man has a right to constrain his neighbor in any thing. Fortunately, so long as the moral law is written in the hearts of men, such a state of society is an absolute impossibility. If it could be carried out, desolation and destruction would rule the earth.

With which dismal Picayunish prophecy endeth the first lesson. T.

It will be remembered that, on the eve of the frightful torture applied not long ago to a Texas criminal burned at the stake by a mob of fiends, J. W. Sullivan indulged himself in an untimely prophecy of the humane treatment that offenders would receive under the *régime* of the Referendum. He based this prophecy upon the abolition of capital punishment in Switzerland, where the Referendum is enjoyed. The Texas horror promptly gave this prophecy a very black eye, and now an absolutely fatal blow has been dealt it by the progress of events in Switzerland, as may be seen from the following extract from the editorial columns of the New York "Sun" of May 2: "Switzerland is apparently about to return to the death penalty. The increase of crime and the horrible character of some of the butcheries perpetrated by the assassins have brought a considerable number of the voters to the sad conviction that the condition of the country will be benefited by the reappearance of the scaffold. In 1874 an amendment to the Federal constitution, proclaiming the abolition of the death penalty throughout the entire territory of the Confederation, was adopted. In 1879, just five years afterward, this amendment was abolished. The vote which wiped it out, however, did not precisely restore the executioners to their old functions. It simply gave power to the cantons to reintroduce the death penalty, in their penal codes, if they chose to do so. The electors who voted for the revision of the law of 1874 were not all desirous to return to the old method. The majority of them, in all probability, wished to record their hostility to centralization. But since 1879 eight cantons have availed themselves of the privilege granted by the revision, and have reëstablished the death penalty. These cantons are Appenzell, Obwalden, Uri, Valais, Zug, Saint-Gall, Lucerne, and Schwytz. In addition to the above, Schaffhausen has just wheeled into line, and the other cantons are expected to follow in short order. This may be a melancholy retrograde movement; but, such as it is, it is." Great is the Referendum, immense is the Initiative, and huge is their Prophet!

Mr. Morrison I. Swift of Boston invites me to give half a column of Liberty's space to a document which he has sent to numerous labor papers. It opens with this sentence: "The first day of May, 1900, should be fixed upon as the time for changing the present industrial system." This is as far as I have read. It is far enough. It is too far. I decline to print the document. Any man who has no more accurate conception of the manner in which industrial progress is effected than is indicated by this sentence should be encouraged to pay his own printing bills.

Healthy Self-Assertion.

To the Editor of Liberty:

I greatly admire your statement that Liberty is "a journal edited to suit its editor, not its readers." Some would-be Anarchists, who know nothing of Anarchism but the name, accuse you and Victor Yarros of "big head." Well, your big head is all right. It is just what is needed among radical reformers, and not the so much wished-for brutal "unison." As Ibsen says: "He is the strongest man on earth who stands alone."

A. A. Soreng.

Marvin, S. Dak., April 26, 1893.

Problems of Anarchism.

(Continued from page 1.)

need; it is control of their own labor and the opportunities to employ it. The latter will not be obtained by securing the former. Hence democracy, or the popular control of political power, being a purely negative aim, is no remedy for wage slavery; it does not even lead to the remedy, and is not an indispensable weapon.

We have seen that the workman's right to vote does not prevent the capitalist from wielding the machinery of authority in his own interest, and we should also keep in mind that legislative and judicial power are equally beyond the grasp of the laborer. Laws are made directly or indirectly in the interest of the capitalist class, and they are always administered and interpreted by judges and lawyers in the same spirit.* If a striker escapes the policeman's club and the militiaman's bullet, he has still to run the gauntlet of the judge and the jailer, who sometimes hand him on to the hangman. Those inductions are entirely within the data furnished by current history in this great republic.

In seeking to understand the labor problem it is evident from the foregoing that we should know the cause of the economic power which the possession of capital gives, and learn how our social system produces classes that are not due to differences of character, virtues, or industry, among whom, as Mill fifty years ago wrote, "the produce of labor is apportioned almost in an inverse ratio to the labor, the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in a descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable, until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labor cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessaries of life."

Our investigation will necessarily be occupied as much in sifting out the chaff and rejecting the untrustworthy conceptions among established teaching as in the discovery of reliable and useful principles. To narrow the scope of the inquiry by exhausting false views and to show that the remedy does not lie this way or that is a method essentially scientific. When, for example, it is demonstrated that perpetual motion is unattainable by mechanical device, that gold cannot be synthetically manufactured in a laboratory, and that the philosopher's stone is an impossible dream, much otherwise valuable effort is saved and true science is advanced. A like gain is made when human intelligence ceases to concern itself with the soul's hereafter, but turns its attention to realizing a better life in the present world. In social and economic reform the same process has to be gone through, will-o'-the-wisps are pursued on all sides, and every door that is closed by logic and science with the sign "fallacy" or "error" writ over it is a step nearer the attainable and the true.

Wm. Bailie.

*Since this was written we have had examples in the Ann Arbor, New Orleans, and other cases of the true function of the bench in administering the law between labor and capital. Even the laws enacted with much flourish of trumpets and flapping of labor reformers' wings against capital in the interest of the people are with their usual impartiality interpreted by the legal parasites to the utter damnation of the workingman.

The Sociological Index.

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BELLES-LETTRES.

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*1072. In the Footsteps of Dickens. Illustrated. By Harger Ragan. Cosmopolitan, May. 12 pages.

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